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SPECIAL FEATURE
SUPPLEMENT

THE LURE OF DEATH'S WHITE DESERT

STEFANSSON'S EXPEDITION ON THE MOVE

MacMILLAN IN ARCTIC COSTUME

Courtesy American Museum of Natural History

AN EXPLORER'S VESSEL FROZEN IN.

PEARY. © by Doubleday Page & Co

CAPT. BOB BARTLETT.
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BARTLETT'S NEPTUNE, THE RESCUE SHIP.

Finding of Both Poles No Damper on Arctic Explorers' Zeal

By GEORGE A. BRAKELEY.

A team of sledge dogs panting at the pole,
A flask of wine, a banner, and my goal
Beside me, shadowed on the icy waste,
Oh, icy waste were Heaven to my soul!
—Robert E. Peary and others.

SO sings the Omar of the northland. This is the heart's desire of every man who has ever travelled the frozen silences, the very goal of all the adventurers who during 400 years have lived day by day with death to reach that imaginary spot upon which in all ~~that time only~~ one man has ever set his foot—the pole. One success in four centuries; it would seem to be a record that would discourage the most courageous and determined. But it does not. It may be that the pole will never be attained again and that Robert Peary will stand forth for all time as the sole victor, but it will never be because the effort has not been made.

As long as there are men so long will they seek the Golden Fleece of ice and snow.

Donald MacMillan, just back from a vain search for Crocker Land, exploration's greatest mirage, does not return a disappointed man. Instead he is brimming over with enthusiasm for the wonders he has seen and the wonders new expeditions may reveal in the regions he has been travelling.

It is so with all of his kind. Month after month of cold, starvation, sickness, fatigue mean nothing to these twentieth century Vikings. To them hardships are merely part of the game, objectionable more for the hindrance they are than for the suffering they entail.

The Crocker Land expedition is by no means a failure, for it has established certain definite scientific facts without which the hydrographers of the world could never rest content. It has shown that Crocker Land, which Admiral Peary thought he saw in 1906 from the top of Cape Thomas Hubbard, is, in the words of MacMillan, "a wonderful image. It was but a mirage, but so clear that you could see green hills covered with vegetation rising high above the water."

"Peary was deceived by a mirage," MacMillan goes on to say, "due to layers of air at different densities suspended close to the ice. Peary sighted this supposed land from a cliff 1,000 feet high. We mounted the same cliff and for four days were deceived. Finally when the sun lifted it was no longer there. * * * It was supposed to be 120 miles northwest from Cape Thomas Hubbard, but we sailed 151 miles northwest, passing over the supposed Crocker Land. It deceived the whole party, and Small [Jonathan C. Small, mechanic and general aid] insisted that Crocker Land was somewhere near, but finally we had to admit that Peary was mistaken.

"Don't think, however, that Peary was faking. It would deceive any man, no matter who he was."

Peary's Report an Allurement.

Admiral Peary's announcement upon his return from the Arctic expedition of 1906-07 that he had discovered a new continent occasioned the greatest interest in the scientific and geographical world. The explorer's failure to furnish exact data and his inability at the time of his discovery to visit the mysterious land which he had seen brought on a controversy that raged from then to the day that the cables first brought word from the MacMillan party puncturing the bubble.

It was in 1912 that the American Museum of Natural History, in conjunction with the American Geographical Society and the University of Illinois, proposed to send an expedition to investigate the Peary claim. In 1913 MacMillan, who had been one of the Admiral's lieutenants on his successful dash to the pole, was sent out with a splendidly equipped force on the steamship Diana from North Sydney, Nova Scotia. Misfortune overtook them at the very start, for their craft was wrecked on Borges Point, on the Labrador coast. Nothing daunted, however, they returned to St. John's, Newfoundland, and were transferred to the steamship Erik, which landed them at Etah, their base, on August 20, 1913.

From there on it was a battle of man and dogs against the elements, a daily struggle in which virtually every hour brought them face to face with death in its most desolate form.

There is a price to be paid for these Arctic journeyings besides the toll in health and life. The Crocker Land affair has cost more than $300,000, including the loss of two good ships, the Diana, upon which the party left New York, and the Danmark, which was secured to go up and bring them home when word came that they were at the verge of starvation and unlikely to survive another winter in the deadly cold. The Danmark, one of the stanchest of north water whalers, was caught in the ice about 175 miles from Etah and is probably there still unless her sides have been crushed in and she has sunk.

It was not until Capt. Bob Bartlett, king of all Arctic sailors, who was with Peary when the pole was found, took his sturdy Neptune and won his way to Etah that relief was possible. His voyage unquestionably saved lives, but it was at a sore cost to his ship, for the Neptune is very badly battered and may never be good again for the kind of work Capt. Bob glories in.

That too is all part of the game, and there is glory enough to console the rescuer, who not only got to the MacMillan expedition in time to bring the members all back alive but made the voyage to Etah and back in the fastest time on record. A great man, Capt. Bob, one of the old school of navigators who never knew when they were licked and were always looking forward to the next fight.

Scylla and Charybdis in Ice.

The first voyage up to Etah, in which MacMillan's Diana was wrecked, was a hazardous one. Repeatedly the ship passed icebergs a thousand feet high, and it was in dodging one of these monsters that she came to grief. In an effort to avoid being impaled upon a berg, and with the fate of the Titanic staring him in the face, the vessel's helmsman tried desperately to break through and had almost succeeded when night closed down.

The following morning, July 15, 1913, dawn came to show upon one hand a mountain of ice looming threateningly above and on the other a forbidding wall of rock a hundred feet high. The Diana went smashing on a reef, tearing off ninety feet of her keel. Only unusually smooth water made possible the salving of her cargo. As it was, days and days of the most exhausting and perilous labor were required to get the stuff on the rocky shore, whence it was finally carried to an Eskimo village.

It seemed as if no greater trouble could come to the party than that, but subsequent events surpassed it as far as the wild imaginings of a moving picture director exceed the most extravagant moments of old style melodrama. MacMillan rushed his men with all possible speed, for he knew that every moment gained then meant almost a week later on. The party returned to St. John's, whence a fresh start was made at once, bringing them to Etah on August 20. The start from there for Crocker Land was delayed for nearly six months, weather conditions making departure impossible.

Admiral Peary had reported his discovery of the new continent upon his return from the Arctic in 1906 in the following announcement:

"The exploration of Crocker Land easily takes first rank among problems demanding exploration, now that the pole has been reached and the insularity of Greenland has been determined. And, further than this, should this land, the distant peaks of which I was fortunate enough to see from Cape Thomas Hubbard in July, 1906, prove to be a land of large extent the possibilities will be most alluring, for such land will become the gateway to other lands or seas represented by the large blank spaces on the maps between the north pole and Bering Strait."

With such a spur from the master explorer it was not strange that MacMillan and his companions should have been prepared for superhuman exertions. Their leader had been himself a lieutenant of Peary. Ensign Fitzhugh Green, U. S. N., engineer and physicist of the expedition, was as devout a Peary follower, and the others had all confidently believed that Peary was right. They were Prof. Maurice C. Tanquary of the University of Illinois, zoologist; W. Elmer Ekblaw of the University of Illinois, botanist and geologist; Jerome Lee Allen, wireless operator; Dr. Harrison J. Hunt of Bangor, Me., surgeon, and Jonathan Small of Provincetown, Mass., general handy man. All were experienced travellers, inured to hardship, and all were imbued with the utmost determination to reach Crocker Land or die in the attempt.

Undiscouraged even by their great misfortune in being wrecked and delayed many precious days, the party left Etah on February 13, 1914. Their bad luck was still with them, however, for the poor condition of the dogs and an outbreak of influenza and mumps—seemingly odd diseases for Arctic circles—compelled them to return to their base before they had gone a hundred miles.

"The reorganized party fed up the dogs on walrus meat," says MacMillan, "and left again on March 11 with ten sledges and eighty-five dogs driven by seven natives, Elmer Ekblaw, Ensign Green and myself. By following the course of the open water we crossed Smith Sound in six hours. Profiting by the experiences of Cook and Sverdrup, we decided to cross Ellesmere Land by way of the Beistadt Glacier. We ascended to a height of 4,700 feet, the lowest temperature recorded being 55 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

"Ekblaw's feet were so badly frosted on the glacier that I was compelled to send him back from the head of Bay Fjord. Ensign Green returned to Hayes Sound for oil and pemmican and was to join the party at Cape Thomas Hubbard. Perfect weather and smooth ice in Eureka Sound enabled us to cover ninety miles in three days. Large herds of musk oxen, wolves and caribou furnished meat for men and dogs. At Hvitberg we found a cache of milk and pemmican left by Sverdrup twelve years ago. Both were in good condition. (Cold storage men take notice.) We reached the northern end of Axel Heiberg Land on April 11. Ensign Green came on schedule time, April 12, with supplies needed for the Polar Sea dash. The supporting party went back from there. The main party for the attack on Crocker Land consisted of only four, two natives, Green and myself. I found here two records and a piece of an American flag left by Peary in 1906. The first ten miles on the Polar Sea afforded good travelling over a hard, rolling surface. The next twenty consisted of a chaotic mass of pressure ridges, open water and newly frozen leads.

"We were held up twice for a few hours and crossed thirty-four leads in all (leads are open spaces thinly frozen over and very dangerous). Beyond the leads we were favored with the very best of going, making twenty and thirty miles a day. We saw a mirage of sea ice repeatedly which greatly resembled land. This extended well around into the north, over Peary's trail of 1908, and at times joined the northern shore of Grant Land. On April 23 we reached the supposed site of Crocker Land. The meridian altitude and time sights gave us a longitude of 108:22 east and latitude 82:30.

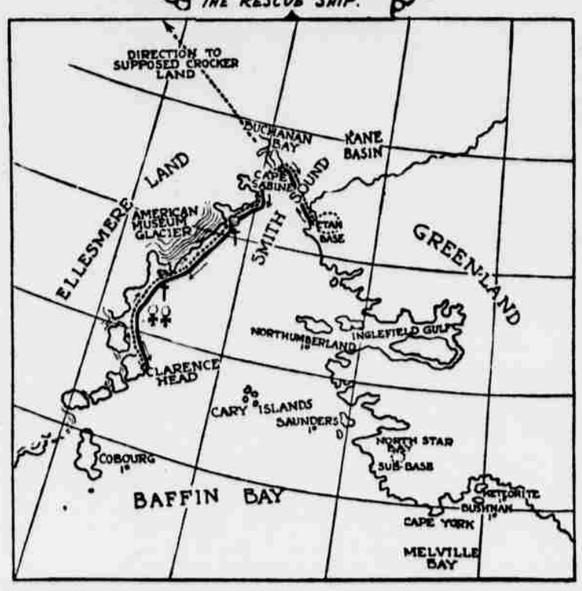
"The weather was perfect and no land in sight. Throughout March the leads and pressure ridges trended toward the southwest. From our last camp as far as the eye could reach it seemed one chaotic mass of ice leads and pressure ridges intersecting without definite direction. The general character of the ice would indicate the action of very strong tides or currents, or possibly a large area broken in passage over shoal ground. There was no bottom at 150 fathoms. We arrived at Cape Thomas Hubbard on April 28 and reached Etah on May 21, a few days before the breaking up of Smith Sound.

"I have been fortunate in finding some records of previous expeditions. I have two of Dr. Kane's expedition of sixty-one years ago, and have also the lining of his cap, which he hoisted as a flag at what was then the farthest north. The letters 'O. K.,' which he marked with the pointed end of a bullet on it, are still visible. I have also a record made by the British expedition of 1875-76 under Commander Nares. A record written by Capt. Feilden, the naturalist, was found at Cape Sabina."

Back in Etah and with his appointed task finished, MacMillan could have found ample excuse for a return to civilization and safety. But that is not the sort of man he is. Instead he determined to spend some time in exploring northern Greenland and other Arctic regions about which geographers were curious. The exhaustion of their supplies made the position of the party extremely perilous from this time on. All of this, however, did not become known until much later, for during the remainder of 1913 and until the fall of 1914 not a word came through from MacMillan and it was feared that all had perished. First tidings of the expedition came from Knud Rasmussen, the Danish explorer, who was wandering around in his favorite haunts in the north and who brought through a letter from MacMillan declaring that Crocker Land did not exist and giving plans for further work from Etah, which had also been the base of Peary's successful dash to the pole.

Efforts to Relieve MacMillan.

Later on word came that the party was in dire extremity, and the American Museum at once began preparations for sending a relief expedition. Dr. Edmund Otis Hovey of the museum and Capt. George B. Comer went north early in 1915 on the George B. Cluett. Like the Diana, this ship met with disaster in North Star Bay. There Rasmussen came to their aid and loaned the relief party a steam launch, on which they finally reached Etah. There they found MacMillan, Green and Allen at the verge of starvation. Allen and Green eventually started on a perilous sledge voyage which at last brought them to Danish settlements. Behind them they left the four white men, MacMillan, Small, Hovey and Comer, Ekblaw and Tanquary having returned previously. Green reached this country in 1916, as did Allen.



Map prepared by American Museum of Natural History showing MacMillan explorations of 1917. Heavy line — indicates outward trip; Dotted line .... return trip. Crosses + indicate location of islands which MacMillan says do not exist. Daggers † indicate location of newly discovered islands.

Roll of Heroes Who Have Sought "Farther Places" Begins 325 B. C.

With Hovey and Comer in peril, with MacMillan the question of relief now became still more imperative. The steamship Danmark was sent up by the museum committee, but she too was disabled.

"A third ineffectual attempt at relief will compel us to resort to the Eskimo mode of living—an igloo for shelter, skins for clothing and meat for food"—was the next message that came through.

By this time the case was evidently desperate and Capt. Bartlett was called upon. The Neptune left St. John's on July 10 this year, made the rough trip to Etah in twenty-four days, took MacMillan aboard and made the return journey in twenty days. Bartlett found on his arrival at Etah that Dr. Hovey, due to pressing personal affairs at home, had left there by sledge on March 24. On August 26, the same day that MacMillan got back to Sydney, Hovey arrived in New York from Copenhagen. He had made the trip across Melville Bay, the same route Dr. Hunt had taken a month before him, in twenty-one days, a distance of 200 miles. The remaining 900 miles to Godhavn, a Danish settlement, he made in twenty-five days. There he embarked on a Danish vessel, reaching Copenhagen on July 26.

The remarkable thing about the MacMillan expedition which sets it apart from many others of the sort is that not a single fatality attended it. There were moments a plenty when it seemed as if no one would come out alive, but some kind fairy was evidently on the watch, for there was not even any very serious illness, although the experiences met with were among the most remarkable in the history of Arctic exploration. What a relief it was to those who stayed until the end when Bartlett and the Neptune hove into view!

Hardships, but No Sickness.

"We had some hardships, of course," MacMillan relates modestly, "due to the cold, but we had no sickness whatever. The only thing that saved us from scurvy was our fresh meat supply. The men always got fresh meat until near the last, when Small and I lived on dog biscuits and duck eggs. I tell you Bob Bartlett was welcomed by us. When Bob arrived Small and I were the only two members of the original expedition at Etah. We were living with the Eskimos and had planned to stay all winter with them, but a taste of real bread was certainly welcome after dog biscuits for two or three months. Eskimos had brought us word that the war was on, but we knew practically nothing about it until Bartlett arrived with papers and put an end to the arguments Small and I had been having as to whether the Germans had reached Paris."

The relief voyage of the Neptune is a whole story in itself, in ordinary circumstances. Not the least interesting part of it is the supply cargo she carried. Included were some unusual things sent north to discharge the obligations of the MacMillan party to the Eskimos who had sheltered them. There were none of Dr. Cook's famous gumdrops, but there was a Victrola—which brings to mind the story of the Alaskan explorer who once climbed a high mountain in the northern part of that territory. He seemed to be absolutely alone, not a human being for miles around, so he proceeded to give vent to a grandiloquent address to the echoes.

Stopping, he was amazed to hear the sound of music, cracked to be sure, but still music, from the direction of a hill across the valley. A long climb finally brought him to the spot from which the sound came. As he got nearer there came to his ears the unmistakable strains of "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." There in a hollow he found an Alaskan Indian crouched in front of an ancient phonograph, absorbed beyond interruption in the dulcet tones of that once popular ditty.

So Capt. Bartlett took up some of the latest rags and jazz tunes for midnight Eskimo dance affairs. Also there was tea, of which Eskimos are inordinately fond, and chewing tobacco and other luxuries in addition to ton upon ton of food and other necessaries. This really ought to be a big winter in arctic social circles.

MacMillan and his companions count themselves extremely lucky to have returned in safety at last, for the history of arctic explorations chronicles many a tragic death. In most cases there has never even been any word of the unfortunates who perished. Back in 1845 Sir John Franklin set sail with a party of 135 in the Erebus and the Terror to find a passage from Lancaster Sound to Bering Strait. Not one of them was ever seen again by civilized men.

For ten years thereafter the British Government kept sending out relief expeditions, and when the Government finally gave up hope Lady Franklin herself, who had never despaired, equipped a yacht under Capt. McClintock and bade him search until some trace at least of her husband was found. From Eskimos Capt. McClintock learned that one of the Franklin ships had been crushed by ice and sunk, and the other had been driven aground. The survivors, the Eskimos said, had gone away to a "big river." They displayed buttons, spoons and other articles from the Franklin ships. Presumably Sir John and his men had started out for civilization afoot and perished miserably on the way.

Finally Lieut. Hobson of Capt. McClintock's party found on the western shore of King William's Land a note written by Lieut. Gore of the Franklin expedition saying that the party, "consisting of two officers and six men," had left the ships on May 24, 1847, and that all were well. But there was scrawled on the margin of the same note, under date of a year later, a memorandum to the effect that Sir John had died. That was the last trace of them ever discovered. Incidentally more than 7,000 miles of new coast line was charted during the search.

Both Capt. Vitus Bering and Hendrik Hudson died in the arctic after discovering the waters that bear their names. Hudson perished in a small boat in which he, his little son and the sick men of his party had been cast adrift by a mutinous crew. Bering and most of his men died of scurvy.

In 1879 Lieut. De Long, U. S. A., and two members of his crew died of exhaustion and starvation after their ship, the Jeanette, had been crushed in the ice. Lieut. A. W. Greely and six men were rescued at the point of death from Cape Sabine in 1884. The MacMillan expedition found traces of the Greely party on their Crocker Land jaunt. One of the most foolhardy of northern attempts was that of S. A. Andree, a Swedish scientist, who started for the north pole in 1897 in a balloon from Danes Island, north of Spitzbergen. A single message, dropped some hours after he started, was the only word that ever came back. Every few years since then there have come wild rumors of the finding of Andree or traces of his balloon.

In the '90s Mylius Erichsen perished on the north coast of Greenland. A companion got back alive, but died of exhaustion after recording Erichsen's fate in a diary.

Death of Scott, a Hero.

Of all the tragedies of polar exploration the greatest is that of the Englishman, Capt. Robert F. Scott, R. N., who died after actually reaching the south pole. The bitterest disappointment that could come to man must have been felt by this heroic pioneer, for when after Herculean efforts he reached his goal it was only to find that Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian, had been there a month and four days before him. Imagine the feelings that must have been his when he found the Norwegian flag flying at the pole, Scott and four other members of his expedition died two months later, 155 miles from their base of supplies, on their return.

Scott's message to the public, written as he lay dying and found by the relief party, will live forever in the annals of exploration and heroism.

"I do not think human beings ever came through such months as we have

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